

Amendments to the Drawings:

Please substitute the attached replacement drawing sheet 2/2 (Figures 3-5) for the originally filed drawing sheet 2/2.

Figures 3 and 5 have been amended to correct inconsistencies with reference numerals. The specific changes which have been made are described below.

In Figure 3, reference numeral 64 at the upper right end of the male coupler has been changed to reference numeral 68; and reference numeral 56 at the lower right end of the male coupler has been deleted; and reference numeral 58 at the lower left end of the male coupler has been removed; and reference numeral 68 at the upper left end of the female coupler has been changed to reference numeral 55.

In Figure 4, reference numeral 68 at the lower left end of the female coupler has been changed to reference numeral 55.

No changes have been made to Figure 5.

REMARKS

This Reply and Amendment is intended to be completely responsive to the non-final Office Action. Claims 1-34 are pending in this Application and currently stand rejected. Independent Claims 1, 21 and 30 have been amended to recite subject matter that the Applicants believe is allowable and overcomes the rejections. Dependent Claims 10-15, 17, 20, 29 and 34 have been amended for clarity and consistency, and to overcome the objections raised by the Examiner.

The Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present Application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Drawing Objections

On page 2 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner objected to Figures 3 and 4 because the reference numerals 56 and 58 were used to reference different components.

The Applicants have amended Figures 3 and 4 in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(d) to address the inconsistencies in the reference numerals and respectfully request withdrawal of the this objection to the drawings.

On page 3 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner objected to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) and stated that the “oval-shaped couplers (claim 27) must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s).”

The Applicants respectfully direct the Examiner’s attention to Figure 6, which is a cross-sectional view of the female coupler. Figure 6 illustrated by way of example that the couplers may be oval-shaped. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a).

Specification Objections

On page 4 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner objected to the Abstract, stating that “the phrase ‘an apparatus for coupling ends of a first garden hose and a second garden hose comprising’ should be deleted.”

The Applicants have submitted a Replacement Abstract appended hereto, in which the phrase ‘an apparatus for coupling ends of a first garden hose and a second garden hose comprising’ has been deleted. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this objection to the Abstract.

On page 4 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner objected to the Specification due to several informalities in paragraphs [0018], [0021] and [0024]. The Applicants have amended paragraphs [0018], [0021] and [0024] to correct the identified informalities and respectfully request withdrawal of the objections to the Specification.

Claim Objections

Independent Claims 1, 21 and 30

On pages 4-5 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner objected to independent Claims 1, 21 and 30 regarding the ability of the female coupler to swivel.

The Applicants respectfully direct the Examiner’s attention to paragraph [0018] of the Specification which states that “bearing portion [42] is folded over ridge 30 in such a manner to allow inner ferrule 40 to swivel within female coupler 14 about ridge 30.” As recited in Claims 1, 21 and 30, the “inner ferrule may swivel relative to the female coupler thereby enabling the female coupler to be swiveled about the second hose without rotating the second hose” (regardless whether the male coupler and the female coupler are coupled to each other.

Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection to independent Claims 1, 21 and 30.

Claim 12

On page 4 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner objected to Claim 12 regarding what the term “cross-dimension” means.

The Applicants have amended dependent Claim 12 to replace “cross-dimension” with “cross-sectional width dimension.” Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection to dependent Claim 12.

Claims 20, 29 and 34

On pages 4-5 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner objected to dependent Claims 20, 29 and 34 regarding recitation of the “hose” in relation to a “first hose” and a “second hose.”

The Applicants have amended dependent Claims 20, 29 and 34 to clarify the relationship of the recited hoses, and respectfully request withdrawal of the objection to dependent Claims 20, 29 and 34.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

On pages 5-8 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-17 and 19-34 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,017,203 (“Macleod”) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

Macleod discloses a “connector or coupling 1, which may either be a male connector 2 or a female connector 3, applied to a hose 4” (col. 3, lines 26-28). “FIG. 5 discloses the female connector or member which comprises a cup-shaped body member or nut 13” (see col. 3, lines 57-58). “A hollow female tail member 16 is adapted to cooperate with the nut 13 by inserting the front end 17 thereof through the central opening 15 in the nut 13” (see col. 3, lines 61-64). “The female tail 16 is adapted to be inserted in the end of the hose 4” with “the end of the hose over the female tail piece 16” (see col. 3, lines 70-73).

Independent Claims 1, 21 and 30 each require a combination of elements including, among others, a “female coupler having an inner cavity and being configured to attach to the second hose in the inner cavity by way of a first ferrule assembly disposed within the inner cavity.”

In contrast, Macleod describes a female connector (3) with a tail (16) having an outside that attaches to the inside of the hose. The subject matter of Claims 1, 21 and 30 are not disclosed, taught or suggested by Document D1, because Macleod relates to a female coupler received inside the hose, not over an outside of the hose, as required by independent Claims 1, 21 and 30.

It should also be noted that none of the cited prior art documents appear to disclose or suggest oval-shaped housings as now recited in dependent Claims 10, 11, 13, 14, 17 (as amended). The oval shaped housings are specifically recited in the specification at (among others) paragraph [0017], line 3; paragraph [0021], line 2; and paragraph [0025], lines 1-3, and as shown in Figure 6.

Accordingly, the Applicants submit that independent Claims 1, 21 and 30 (as amended) are not anticipated by Macleod under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection, and reconsideration and allowance of independent Claims 1, 21 and 30, and dependent Claims 2-20, 22-29 and 31-34, as they depend from the independent claims (35 U.S.C. § 112 ¶ 4).

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

On pages 8-9 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner rejected dependent Claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Macleod.

Dependent Claim 18 depends from independent Claim 1 (as amended). As previously stated, the Applicants have amended independent Claim 1. The Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim 1 (as amended) is now in condition for allowance, and that dependent Claim 18 is also in condition for allowance (35 U.S.C. § 112 ¶ 4).

Accordingly, the Applicants submit that dependent Claim 18 is not obvious in view of Macleod and respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection, and reconsideration and allowance of dependent Claim 18.

* * *

The Applicants respectfully submit that each and every outstanding objection and rejection to the drawings, specification and pending claims has been overcome, and that the Application is in condition for allowance. The Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of pending Claims 1-34.

The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned by telephone if the Examiner believes that a telephone interview or Examiner's amendment would advance the prosecution of the present application.

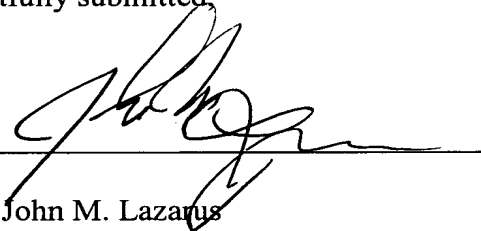
The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 06-1447. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 06-1447. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, the Applicants hereby petition for such extension under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 06-1447.

Respectfully submitted,

Date

3/16/2006

By



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